



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

Contact: Kevin Kelly

Phone: (573) 751-9300

Governor Office Building, Suite 900

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MEDIA ADVISORY

MISSOURI UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND

JEFFERSON CITY--To assist low-income and disabled Missourians in obtaining essential local telecommunications services, the Missouri Universal Service Fund begins in May.

The program will be funded through an assessment to Missouri telecommunications carriers. Those carriers will then place a monthly "Missouri Universal Service Fund" surcharge on the bills of its residential and business customers.

Beginning in June, qualifying low-income and disabled customers can begin receiving state universal service fund support of up to \$3.50 a month. For low-income customers, state support would be in addition to assistance already available through the federal universal service fund program. Customers already receiving support from the federal fund will automatically qualify for the state fund. Customers are urged to contact their local telephone company for more information.

Pursuant to a state law previously passed by the Missouri General Assembly, the Public Service Commission established the framework for a Missouri Universal Service Fund. The PSC and the Universal Service Fund Board have worked to develop the structure of assessments and surcharges as well as the appointment of a fund administrator. Beginning on May 1, 2005, Missouri customers will see a surcharge on their monthly telephone bill in the amount of 0.18% of their basic local and long distance charges on long distance calls made within Missouri. For example, a \$30 bill will generate a surcharge of approximately 6 cents for that customer. A \$50 bill will result in a monthly surcharge of approximately 9 cents.

More than 40 other states in the country currently have a state Universal Service Fund for low-income and/or disabled customers in an effort to help them receive essential local telephone service.